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plentiful in French, *je lui trouve bonne mine, le médecin lui a trouvé la fièvre*, etc.

P. 32, l. 22. N. "*Qu'est-ce que* ; compare this form with *est-ce que* ; both are emphatic." This sweeping statement is misleading. Whatever they may have been at their origin, nowadays their use has become obligatory and not at all emphatic with certain verbs (for example, most monosyllabic first persons sing.), and common with all. *Est-ce que je pars ? Qu'est-ce que je sens ?* are the habitual, by no means emphatic, forms. In other cases, indeed, some degree of emphasis may still persist.

P. 54, l. 10. "*Qui te retient ?* This *qui* is in common use though *que* is grammatically correct." What student could be blamed who, on the strength of this statement, should frame the sentence *Que te retient ?* But the interrogative *que* is not used in French as subject (except with a few intransitive verbs), and the grammatically correct form is *qu'est-ce qui te retient ?*

P. 96, l. 20. *je vous en supplie*. N. "*en* in such connections anticipates an objective clause beginning with *de*." Not exactly a "clause," since *de* would be followed by an infinitive and not by a finite verb. A following clause would be properly introduced by *que*. *Je vous en supplie* = *Je vous supplie de le faire* = *Je vous supplie que vous le fassiez*.

P. 112, line 14. *C'est du génie*. N. "Observe that the partitive article so frequent in French has often no equivalent in English because the mere absence of the article indicates the partitive idea." True enough, so far as English is concerned, but does not this statement convey the erroneous idea that in French the *article* itself indicates the partitive idea ? This is obviously not so. The partitive idea is conveyed in French as little as in English by the article, it is the preposition *de* which is essential in French to partitive expressions. In *j'ai du vin* and *je n'ai pas de vin*, we have partitive expressions one with the article, one without it. The term "partitive article" should be abandoned since it completely obscures the real question, and this has been done, in fact, by some of the latest grammars.

The annotations in a text-book dealing directly with the language as it is actually written, can become an invaluable aid to the scholarly teaching of living languages, if they keep abreast of

the progress which is being made in the field of linguistic research. They should never lag behind even the best modern grammars, which by their very nature cannot help remaining somewhat conservative.

St. Louis.

C. J. CIPRIANI.

CORRESPONDENCE.

TRANSLATION OF OLD ENGLISH VERSE.

To the Editors of Mod. Lang. Notes.

SIRS :—In the December issue of the *Notes*, Professor C. G. Child attacks a statement of mine to the effect that "no greater mistake exists than to suppose that the rhythm and style" of oldest English poetry "cannot be rendered adequately in modern English speech." He gives two serious reasons for a contrary assertion. "Modern 'Old English' verse," he says, "does not sound in the least like real Old English verse. It is a bastard archeological fabrication, or an atavistic degenerate, or—something else; and it never will be anything else unless" a real poet takes hold of it. The italics are mine, and are intended to express an emotion roused indeed to highest pitch by the Ernulphian sweep of this denunciation, but tempered by awe at the thought of degeneracy which is atavistic, and of something else which never will be anything else, and of my own criminal folly in doing a deed which bears such names. Professor Child's second reason, however, is less overwhelming. The constraints of the Sievers types and of initial rime, he says, keep a translator from "precision of meaning" and from "poetic inspiration." I venture to answer this objection out of hand. Its particular terms really belong with my critic's first and sweeping reason for rejecting the translation in verse, but its general scope of complaint seems to me thoroughly and permanently defeated by a single line from Goethe's great gospel of the poetic art,—

In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,—

a line that may be applied even to the humble function of the translator, and also by Kant's pretty figure of the dove and its vain wish for

flight through unresisting and airless space. But Goethe and Kant are Germans; and Professor Child,—who makes an error in assuming that the exception which I had noted among the German alliterative verse-translations must have been in prose, whereas it was really in blank verse,—waxes very playful about the Teutonic habit of mind. I shall not quote his vivacious satire; it may be sport, but it seems to me hardly sportsmanlike; and I shall demand more solid reasons for rejecting my argument from example than mere scoffing at men whose labors have made it possible for Professor Child to ride at all on his gay quests in English philology. Nor can he ask me to discuss his jest at my own expense in regard to a theory of communal verse which has nothing to do with this matter of translation, which I never propounded or defended, and which has been fastened on me for reasons—to quote a friendly reviewer—that “tax one’s powers of divination.” But, then, it makes close upon a column of merriment!

For my own part, I think the question of verse-translation a very important matter, and I regard as well worth a reasoned and deliberate answer the four or five lines where your correspondent states his actual objection to a form of poetry which “does not sound at all like real Old English verse.”

Precisely what does Professor Child mean by this assertion? That the strict metrical scheme, as shown more or less accurately by the “types” of Sievers, cannot now be followed? Everybody will assent. Or does he mean that the old movement in its essentials, the old scheme of rime in its essentials, and the old repetition in forward-and-back, so characteristic of style as well as of rhythm, cannot be revived? Does he mean that oldest English verse as a distinct rhythmical system is a lost and buried art, and that it failed to cross the chasm in speech and song made by the Norman conquest? This I deny. It did cross that chasm, not as an “atavistic degenerate,” although it appeared in Chaucer’s own time as a very vigorous and thoroughly popular case of real atavism. To take only one of its incarnations, the *Piers the Plowman* poems “are written throughout,” says Professor Manly, “in alliterative verse of the same general type as that of *Beowulf*”; while Luick, treating the whole range

of this revival of older rhythm, speaks of its “lebendiger entwicklung bei treuem festhalten an alten grundformen.” Six centuries fall between the two periods, involving radical changes in speech, habit, thought; and yet the old verse still voices deep emotion of the fourteenth century Englishman. Much has been written upon this theme; and the upshot of considerable investigation is that the ancient rhythm, though necessarily altered in some details, and often very carelessly observed, is essentially unimpaired, and even adheres with reasonable fidelity to the old “types.” No one should say that it “does not sound in the least like Old English verse.” More to the point, the modern man reads it with pleasure and profit. It is not his own preference, not his own way of voicing emotion; but he hears its sturdy quadruple beat, the stretched metre of its antique song, by no means as an alien verse. The final and crucial question thus arises: Can the modern translator use this verse, perfectly audible, intelligible and enjoyable as it is, and “of the same general type as that of *Beowulf*,” in our modern speech? What must be lost in this transfer over five centuries, and what can be kept fairly intact? Evidently we are to lose about the same elements of speech and song that we lose in the case of Chaucer’s versification. The silencing of the final *e* gives a different sound to the verse in both cases, unless we choose to restore the effect by the use of words which still have a feminine ending. Luick in his clear summary, *Anglia*, xi, 613 f., actually attributes the “end of an auld sang,” the final disappearance of the ancient metre, to the fact that first *ē* and then *ēd* and *ēs* ceased to be sounded. I should rather say that the new verse was so overwhelmingly better suited to English poetic art, that it forced its ancient competitor fairly out of existence. The last stage-coach had run, not because the horses could no longer pull it, but because nobody would choose it in preference to its rival of steam and rail. Let that be as it may, the concrete facts are here. A verse of *Piers the Plowman*, say—

I was wery forwardred, and went me to reste—

sounds, by consent of scholars, very like “real Old English verse.” It is of the “same general type as the verse of *Beowulf*.” Evidently if I can successfully imitate it in modern speech I ought

to use it in translating *Beowulf*; for the objection raised by Professor Child has no longer the slightest weight. What, then, prevents this imitation? What is lost? Not the initial rime, not the sturdy beat of the four stresses, not that insistent appeal of the forward-and-back of the style due to repetition and parallelism,—all these important elements can be kept, if the translator have sufficient skill. Besides certain collocations of heavy and light syllables, now impossible, one will lose the effect of feminine endings as a persistent fact, feeling not only the loss of the individual endings themselves, but the effect of that loss upon the general movement of the verse. Part of this loss the translator or imitator can prevent; but part of it is irreparable.

Concede this loss; it does not begin to counterbalance the gain, for purposes of translation, in retaining the essential values of the old rhythm. Moreover, it is a mere bagatelle compared with the discords and disturbances which attend a translation of old English verse in new English prose. The prose translation not only fails utterly to keep the essentials of the old rhythm and style, but it thrusts between the reader and the original a mass of misleading suggestions. Every one knows the biblical manner, with hints now of Malory and now of Bunyan and now of Scott, dished up as "exquisite and lucid prose" by panting followers of Mr. Andrew Lang's *Theocritus*; and whoso translates *Beowulf* in this lingo kills *Beowulf*, let us say with Milton, "in the eye." Indeed, the better his prose, the worse his translation in the present case. I do not mean merely "Wardour-Street English," which Professor Child very justly condemns in the preface to his own translation of the epic, the *twy-handled* and *her seemed* industry; but I mean also that really lucid and really exquisite prose which does such wonderful work for a master like Mr. Mac-kail in rendering an exquisite and lucid Greek original. The virtue of oldest English verse was not artistic smoothness and lucidity, but artistic roughness, a kind of ordered violence. Miranda should not be set to work lifting and hauling the huge Saxon logs. There are surer ways of proving *traduttore, traditore*, than by attempting verse translation of Old English, even with the aid of a "pedestrian muse."

If space allowed, I should like to discuss one

other matter with Professor Child. He yearns for the real, the great poet, who shall translate *Beowulf* in adequately great verse. But is *Beowulf* the work of a really great poet? Is it what we now call a really great poem? Is it not rather a precious specimen of a mass of amazingly average and uniform poetry which is great only so far as it is national, racial, epic in the large sense, thinking the thoughts of a new, half-formed civilization, reflecting the life of a keen and conquering folk, and echoing to the clash of battle down long years of warfare on land and sea?

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SATIRE IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—Satire against Pope and Church played a large part in the literature of the Middle Ages. After Walther von der Vogelweide, who was one of the first to raise his voice against the church ("Ich sach mit mînen ougen," etc.), there was scarcely a writer who would not give expression to like sentiments.

In this general denunciation we find in *Vri-dankes Bescheidenheit*, 1229 (publ. by Wilh. Grimm, Goettingen, 1834), on page 154, lines 6 and 7,

"Zu Rôme ist manec valscher list
dar an der bâbst unschuldic ist"

which shows an insight or partiality to some pope as Grimm suggests, which we do not find in any other work, until we come in *Reineke De Vos*. 1498, ll. 4215–16 (Buch II. Cap. 9), upon these lines:

"alsus is dar mannige list,
dar an de pawes unschuldich ist."

It is evident that these lines are copies of the earlier work, since Freidank's *Bescheidenheit* was very popular throughout the Middle Ages, and only ten years after the appearance of *Reineke De Vos* in 1508 Sebastian Brant compiled and published Freidank's *Bescheidenheit* anew, and in this work we read:—

"Man hielt etwan uff kein Spruch nicht,
Den nit Herr Frydank hat gedicht."

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